

It's app-ropos: Ancient Native American trail receives recognition

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Kadyen Howe, 12, a grass dancer, and Tyler Small, 13, a traditional dancer, both of the Northern Cheyenne Nation from Lame Deer, Montana, dance in front of Portage Path CLC after finishing a symbolic walk along South Portage Path with students from the Lippman School as part of a ceremony to unveil a marker for the path that Native Americans used in Akron, Ohio, October 10, 2016. Photo: Mike Cardew/Akron Beacon Journal/TNS

AKRON, Ohio — Last Monday, Jramayne Williams made history.

Jramayne was among about 200 students from three schools who came together for a symbolic walk along the Portage Path Trail, one of the oldest landmarks in Ohio's Summit County. The walk was part of an event to unveil new signage along the path, along with a mobile app created by students from the Northern Cheyenne Nation in Montana, The Lippman School in Akron, and the Portage Path Community Learning Center.

The app provides information about the trail, including its history, maps, and the birds and trees found along the path. The new sign displays a QR code. Walkers and cyclists on the path can scan the code with their smartphones to download the app.

“I was surprised and excited. I had no idea I was going to get to unveil it,” said Jramayne, an 8-year-old third-grader at Portage Path Elementary School in Akron. “I was a little nervous, but I can look at that sign and always know I was a part of it.”

Students Come Together

Lippman School has had an ongoing relationship with the Northern Cheyenne tribe for six years. Each year, members of the Native American tribe, including students, come to Akron. Every other year, students from Lippman travel to Montana.

“We hope that the ceremony will lead to a much larger recognition of this historic place in Akron and will highlight the tribal communities in our country that we just don’t get to see much in our area,” said Sam Chestnut, the head of Lippman School. “Our hope is that this becomes an annual event.”

The ceremony occurred on the traditional Columbus Day holiday. In some cities this day is celebrated as “Indigenous Peoples Day” to honor the original inhabitants of the continent before the Europeans arrived. The ceremony included traditional Northern Cheyenne drumming and singing.

“The drum beat represents the heartbeat of Mother Earth and the heartbeat of our nation, and the grass dancers did a dance to revive and bless the Portage Path. We believe that when people watch the dance, they receive a blessing,” said Burt Medicine Bull. He is a teacher of the Cheyenne language and culture at Chief Dull Knife College in Lame Deer, Montana.

Recognition For Trail

“I am so glad the young people are picking up and seeing our traditions. I hope that by being here today, all of the children will see that it is important to show pride and strengthen their self-identity,” Medicine Bull said. “These three communities and two nations came together and did something great to bring attention to an important landmark in this community. They made it happen together — it’s love.”

The Portage Path is an 8-mile trail that connected the Cuyahoga and Tuscarawas rivers. It was created by Native Americans who used the route in ancient times to transport their canoes over land from one river to the other, so that they could travel by water from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico.

Local history expert and former Deputy Mayor of Akron David Lieberth said the trail was in use hundreds, maybe thousands of years before the Europeans came to the area. He and former Akron Mayor Jeff Fusco participated in last Monday’s event. The two men had asked the two local schools to find a way to honor the Portage Path.

Several Tribes Used Trail

The existing Portage Path is only a portion of the original trail. It was regularly used by several tribes, including the Shawnee, Mingo (Iroquois), Ottawa, Wyandot, Huron and Miami. The trail was mentioned in the earliest treaties between the settlers and the natives, which is an indication of its prominence in history.

Last Monday's event was sponsored by the Summit County Historical Society. In 1999, this organization marked the trail with monumental sculptures. Two bronze statues mark both ends of the historic portage, and 50 arrowhead markers outline the entire trail.

Matthew Garfinkle, an eighth-grade student at Lippman, said he was happy to be a part of the effort to keep the history of the Portage Path alive.

"We spent a lot of time learning about the significance of the path and put a lot of hard work into creating an app that will be one of the best ways for people to learn about it," said Matthew, 13. "I hope the ceremony brought attention to this important part of our history and that more people will be encouraged to walk the path."

Quiz

- 1 Which central idea of the article is MOST supported by the fourth paragraph of the article?

"I was surprised and excited. I had no idea I was going to get to unveil it," said Jramayne, an 8-year-old third-grader at Portage Path Elementary School in Akron. "I was a little nervous, but I can look at that sign and always know I was a part of it."

- (A) Different schools work together to learn about Native American traditions.
- (B) The new app can be used by visitors to learn about the Portage Path.
- (C) The Portage Path is one of the oldest trails still in use in Ohio.
- (D) Students were proud of their work to honor Native American history.
- 2 Which of these sentences would be MOST important to include in an objective summary of the article?
- (A) The ceremony was held on the traditional Columbus Day holiday now celebrated in some cities as "Indigenous Peoples Day."
- (B) The app provides a new way for students to share what they have learned about the history of the Portage Path.
- (C) The new app gives more interesting and accurate information about the trail than the bronze statues and arrowhead markers.
- (D) The 200 students who took the walk did admirable and important work in creating the new smartphone app.
- 3 What is the MOST important reason why Burt Medicine Bull wanted to be part of the ceremony for the Portage Path?
- (A) to help students develop better understanding of Native American history and traditions
- (B) to bring traditional Cheyenne ceremonies to celebrations of "Indigenous People's Day"
- (C) to teach local students about the history of the Portage Path mentioned in early treaties
- (D) to show what various travel routes in Ohio were like before Europeans arrived

- 4 Which of the following MOST influenced Matthew Garfinkle to be part of the Portage Path project?
- (A) the chance to learn how to create a mobile app
 - (B) the chance to learn about tribes that once used the Portage Path
 - (C) the chance to work with the Summit County Historical Society
 - (D) the chance to help others learn about the Portage Path